

*The Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez, has called on the Colombian rebel group, FARC, to end its decades long rebellion and free the hundreds of hostages it's holding. This report from the BBC's Emilio San Pedro:*

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela is a man known for his surprising and often **headline grabbing announcements** but this latest one is extraordinary even by his standards. He's called on the left-wing Colombian FARC rebels **to lay down their arms** and release their hostages. It amounts to **an all-out about-face in policy** for the man who, only a few months ago, called on Colombia and the international community to stop **branding** the group a terrorist organisation and instead recognise the FARC as a **legitimate** rebel army.

Now, Mr Chavez says he believes that **the era of guerrilla movements** in Latin America **is history** and he's called on the FARC's new leader, Alfonso Cano, **unilaterally** to release the hundreds of hostages the group is holding. He said this could lead to a peace process between the rebels and the Colombian government.

Mr Chavez's critics will no doubt wonder whether this **drastic change in policy** is related to the accusations against him by the Colombian President, Alvaro Uribe, who has accused President Chavez of giving the rebels three-hundred-million dollars, something which the Venezuelan leader **denies**.

Emilio San Pedro, BBC

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>headline grabbing announcements</b>	sensational speeches
<b>to lay down their arms</b>	to stop fighting
<b>an all-out about-face in policy</b>	a complete reversal of political direction
<b>branding</b>	naming, describing
<b>legitimate</b>	allowed by law
<b>the era of guerrilla movements</b>	the period of time when unofficial groups used military force within a country to change the policies of that country
<b>is history</b>	is finished
<b>unilaterally</b>	without being offered anything in return
<b>drastic change in policy</b>	surprising change in what the government says it believes in and wants to do
<b>denies</b>	says it isn't true

**More on this story:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7443080.stm>

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